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The Revised Constructed Format

by Bob "Argi" Flack
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Why? Why change something that isn't broken? Simply put, to make it better. **Netrunner**® is a great game, but tournament level play is stale. The best decks are built, analyzed, and tweaked to perfection. While there are many viable tournament decks, there are a select few that are a step above the rest. As the official **Netrunner** players' organization, the Top Runners' Conference (TRC) has listened to players and recognizes that a change is needed. Thus, the Revised Tournament Format was born.

A select committee of TRC members from around the world proposed these changes, after months of discussion both in private and public forums. Aimed at slowing down the game (a little), increasing the number of tournament-viable decks, and keeping all changes simple, the Revised format is showing up in TRC tournaments now.

The current Unlimited format is very open. There are no deck construction limits, except the basic agenda-to-card ratio and minimum deck size stated in the rulebook. The Revised format changes are simple and easy to understand—on purpose. In fact, there are only six changes. Two cards had a simple erratum added, two others gained the keyword Unique, and two were banned from play. Here are the details of the changes and the reasoning behind them.

Errata: Code Viral Cache, Precision Bribery. The sentence "This trashing cannot be prevented." is added as the last sentence on the cards Code Viral Cache and Precision Bribery. This erratum clarifies how these cards work in conjunction with prevention effects. Now when the Corp player trashes Code Viral Cache or Precision Bribery by paying the cost and using the ability printed on the card, the trashing cannot be stopped by Time to Collect or any other prevention effect. The card text of Code Viral Cache and Precision Bribery takes precedence. Unlike the following changes, this erratum is general. It applies to the card, and thus is effective in all formats.

Added Keyword *Unique*: Scaldan, Viral Pipeline. The keyword **Unique** is added to Scaldan and Viral Pipeline. Both of these viruses are nasty in multiples. The simplest way to keep their abilities in the game and limit abuse is to make it so only one copy can be in play at a time.

You can still have several copies in your deck. The keyword **Unique** only limits you to one copy in play at a time.

Banned: Tycho Extension, Enterprise Inc. Shields. Tycho Extension is banned. While banning a card is drastic step, it was justified in this case. Tycho may seem innocent enough, but when combined with Project Consultants and ACME Savings and Loan, the synergy makes for a speedy win. After a lot of thought and discussion, removing Tycho was the least painful solution. Project Consultants is a key card for the Corporation to survive in the late game. It also can be replaced in the Tycho-Consultants-ACME combination with similar cards with very little loss of efficiency. Likewise, ACME can be removed and replaced with other bit gaining cards. The real problem is that Tycho Extension lets you win by scoring only two agenda, and that makes the game too short.

Enterprise Inc. Shields (EIS) is banned, but for a different reason. EIS isn't the most efficient damage prevention card. The problem is that EIS removes all threat of brain or net damage with just a few bits. Armed with three bits and EIS, you can run at will with very little threat of being flatlined. The presence of EIS removes ambushes from tournament decks. By banning EIS, many cards become tournament viable again.

While the changes are simple, the effect on the tournament environment isn't. Fast advancement decks can't use Tycho as the staple speed agenda anymore. Ambush decks (a.k.a. Poison Pill) need to be re-evaluated, since damage prevention isn't as easy anymore. The ability to lock-down a Corp with a nasty virus or bribes comes at a stiffer cost now. Is it still worth it?

On top of all this, the new *Classic* cards mix 52 unknown variables into the equation of a new deck. I know of a new deck using cards from *Classic* that is very promising. I'd say it's a good time to try something new with **Netrunner**. You never know what you'll discover. You could find the latest top deck!

Argi Flack, TRC Program Director

State of the Corp—March 2000

by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes
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I'm going to keep it short, since I shoot my mouth off later on in this issue: Buy more **Netrunner** *Classic™!*

I finally got a look at some sales figures. Obviously, I cannot share the numbers with you, but I can say that despite the difficulty of finding *Classic* in stores, the cards are selling quite well. Nevertheless, only about one-third of the print run has sold. Wizards is looking at the performance of this set to decide the future of other "Classic" games—not to mention the chance for more **Netrunner** cards.

And that includes me. I've paid out of pocket for a case so far, but I plan to purchase at least two more—even if I have to drive to southern Oregon to get it. Holding sealed-deck tournaments is an easy way to drive sales. We've all got to pitch in!

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Famous Netrunner Stacks
"Elementary, My Dear Wilson!"
#6: HYHADIARS (Hope You Have A Disinfectant In A Roving Sub)

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(thanks to Holger Janssen and Daniel Schneider for their helpful comments)

Just like Bozomatic, HYHADIARS (or HYHAD for short) uses the devastating Viral Pipeline from *Proteus*™ as its winning strategy. The main goal is to deliver three Pipe counters and thereby strip away the Corp's single most important asset: actions. Combined with at least two Code Viral Caches, a vicious lock situation for the Corp ensues: A Corp with three Pipe counters has 0 actions per turn and must forgo its next 3 actions to remove the Pipe counters. Normally this would work, but the Caches prevent precisely this option—and since it costs an action (which the Corp doesn't have) plus 5 bits to get rid of a Code Viral Cache, the Corp won't ever get back any actions during the remainder of the game, losing eventually through R&D depletion.

When David Liu created his HYHAD stack in October 1996, he unleashed a steamroller that would flatten many a Corp during its notorious career—for unlike Bozomatic, it is downright brutal. Jim McCoy, for instance, used it at EuCon and was undefeated. On June 16, 1997, David posted a deck listing of his HYHAD deck to the Netrunner-l discussion list and also gave a very detailed and elaborate account of its strategy and tactics. This article is based on David's email to a large part, and if you're interested in the topic, you should definitely have a look at it. Just order the appropriate digest (#9706C) from the Oracle list server.

The following is David Liu's original deck list (45 cards):

11	**Loan from Chiba**
7	**Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood**
4	**Militech MRAM Chip**
1	**Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker**
1	**Joan of Arc**
1	**Viral Pipeline**
4	**Code Viral Cache**
2	**Pirate Broadcast**
2	**Inside Job**
2	**Junkyard BBS**
3	**Time to Collect**
3	**Airport Locker**
2	**The Deck**
2	**Fall Guy**

Like all virus stacks, HYHAD intends to do a lot of running during its games. Viral Pipeline demands a successful run on HQ, R&D, and Archives before it yields a Pipe counter. To cut down on actions, David uses Pirate Broadcast, which conveniently accomplishes these three runs in one action—the extra agenda point is just icing on the cake. Not wasting time with the installation of a full 'breaker suite, David chooses the ubiquitous Bartmoss/Joan of Arc combination to deal with any kind of ice that might be encountered. It is well known that Bartmoss is efficient as far as speed, MU cost, and versatility are concerned, but also that it gets expensive fast if used often (and can fail the Runner during Pirate Broadcast runs on two unlucky rolls of the dice). Therefore, 11 Loan from Chiba are needed to fuel Bartmoss with ludicrous amounts of bits. As a safeguard against premature death by a trashed Loan, David relies on The Deck, Fall Guy, Junkyard BBS, and Time to Collect, the latter of which also protects the Code Viral Caches.

To add still more speed, Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood, in combination with Militech MRAM Chips, quickly gets all essential cards into the Runner's hands. The one Bartmoss is swiftly found with the Airport Lockers, as is Joan of Arc or Viral Pipeline. This kind of card access power, combined with Inside Job (mainly targeted at HQ for an early Code Viral Cache or two), means that the Runner can start doing business almost right from the start. A Corp will have a very hard time building a quick defence against a bit-gaining strategy relying on Loan from Chiba. If it starts off by icing a subfort right away and going for a quickly scored agenda, HYHAD can easily postpone its ultimate plans and go for the agenda, using Inside Job or Airport Locker/Bartmoss in combination with Loan from Chiba.

To paraphrase David's email to the list, HYHAD has three ways of winning:

- The lock: Three Pipe counters plus two Code Viral Caches mean slow, agonizing death by R&D depletion.
- Frequent runs: Taking into account the large number of runs made during HYHAD games, the Runner has a good chance of serendipitous agenda finds—which might yield the 7 points for the victory.
- Pirate Broadcasts: Even if the Runner finds fewer than 7 agenda points while accessing cards, these can eventually make up the difference.

Often, HYHAD can win in fewer than 9 turns.

Incidentally, even a Disinfectant in a Roving Submarine, seemingly a safe protection against Pipe counters, won't do the Corp much good against this stack, despite its name. HYHAD can easily run and trash any Roving Sub with a Disinfectant on a moment's notice a couple of turns into the game. What's more, a Corp player who puts lots of Roving Subs and Disinfectants into his or her deck will have a hard time winning in any case, since those cards don't really help scoring agenda. All in all, the name HYHADIARS is more of a joke than the fear of a possible nemesis.

To quote David Liu again, his stack has a very clear-cut schedule of goals to accomplish. First, get the Code Viral Caches and Time to Collects into play (probably using Inside Job), while being on the lookout for signs of impending Tag 'n' Bag hazards. If the Corp seems likely to use this strategy, first install protection cards like The Deck and Fall Guy to guard the Loans. Against brain and Net damage, big hand size usually constitutes enough of a buffer to prevent a flatline; vital cards lost in this way can be retrieved using Junkyard BBS. The biggest danger to HYHAD is a City Surveillance rezzed when the Runner is just playing a Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood; therefore, all suspicious nodes should be trashed or investigated right away. As soon as this preliminary phase is over, the Runner can install the program suite (if he or she hasn't done so already) and start to deliver Pipe counters, either using Pirate Broadcasts or making single runs on the relevant forts.

One interesting sidenote concerning Pipe counters: As David also pointed out, the timing rules really favor the Runner

here. The moment there is one Socket counter each on R&D, Archives, and HQ, they immediately convert into a Pipe counter. As long as there is at least one Code Viral Cache installed, the Corp cannot do much about that first Pipe counter. Just before the last Socket counter is delivered, the Corp cannot forgo actions to lose the other two counters—because of the Cache. Since the Runner always gets priority when both players want to perform an action at the same time, he or she can shortcut the Corp by invoking this priority rule when the Corp wants to forgo actions, pressing through with the conversion of the counters instead. Once the Pipe counter is in place, it is protected by the Code Viral Cache(s) once more. Usually, the tide has turned against the Corp by this time; with only two actions a turn it is seriously crippled, and later in the game, with three Pipe counters in place, the Runner can usually deliver counters faster than the Corp can forgo actions.

If HYHAD has a structural weakness, it is, quite surprisingly, a problem with supplying bits in the long term. Although Loan from Chiba is the most efficient Runner bit engine in the whole of **Netrunner**, it *still* might not be enough for the demands of HYHAD. Airport Locker is a fast way to get at programs, but it is extravagantly expensive to use. Likewise, the frequent Bartmoss runs are very taxing for the Runner's bit pool. Eleven Loans provide 132 bits, less about 50 bits for installation and Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood, leaving maybe 80 bits for running—enough to break through 10 Hellhounds, no more, no less. If these bits are used up in a longer game, HYHAD burns out. It just can't gain any more quick bits after all of the Loans from Chiba are installed. Luckily for HYHAD, it usually wins before this happens—but if the Corp can sit out the initial onslaught, it is likely to win.

What are survival strategies for a Corporation that faces a HYHAD stack, then? Really heavy ice, as might be found in a Rent-to-Own deck, could eventually stop the Loan-powered Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker. On the other hand, a Rent-to-Own Corp will never have enough bits to trash a Code Viral Cache: Once it has a Pipe counter, it cannot get rid of it. A trap-heavy deck that deals lots of Net or brain damage might slow down or even cripple HYHAD, if vital cards end up in the trash to be retrieved with Junkyard BBS. If both Junkyards themselves go, it might be "game over" for the Runner. Tag 'n' Bag might work too, but with defenses like The Deck and Fall Guy available, meat damage must hit fast and heavily. Another possibility is Underworld Mole to go for the Loans. City Surveillance is possibly the most dangerous card for the Runner, as has been mentioned above. Edgerunner, Inc., Temps is always good for providing actions that can be forgone to remove virus counters. *Classic*'s Superserum agenda might also be worth a thought, since it circumvents the Code Viral Caches. All in all, it's a race against time—a superfast Corp strategy might outrun HYHAD, but it will be very hard pressed. Advice: Ice HQ as heavily as possible and trash all Code Viral Caches on sight, which is more feasible in a Revised Constructed environment (see the following paragraph).

The power of HYHAD has not gone unnoticed, of course, and that is why the new Revised Constructed format addresses this "problem", among others. In a Revised Constructed tournament, the trashing of Code Viral Caches cannot be prevented by Time to Collect, which gives the Corp a better chance of breaking through the lock. Apparently, this erratum to Code Viral Cache is going to be a general one, applying to all formats (qv. Argi's article on p. 1), which really is a relief for all Corp players. Incidentally, Revised's making Viral Pipeline unique doesn't affect HYHAD at all, since it just uses one copy of it anyway. Still, only time will tell whether HYHAD will continue its success story in Revised tourneys, too.

Emails to the Editor: *Bozomatic* Again

by Byron "Neal" Massey
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I read Daniel's letter about your Bozomatic review in the last TRQ issue, and I thought that I could answer a few of the questions he asked:

1) Part of this evaluation depends on how many turns you want to spend setting up. In my experience, Dennis *never* played a game that took nine turns to get running. We always figured on six and sometimes it was five. With that kind of time limitation, it turns out that Jack 'n' Joe, Valu-Pak and Zetatech Software Installer really are the best choices. Of course I would love to be proved wrong (and this was all right after *Proteus* came out, three years ago).

2) It's true that Dennis set out with a goal of an all-program, all-free stack. Daniel suggests that Bodyweight™, etc. is better without those goals. But after a lot of testing with Dennis and Rob Leachman, we found that the very best way to install all those Clowns quickly was to not take the actions to generate bits and pay for Bodyweight.

After four actions, Dennis has generally accomplished the following things:
a) Drawn nine new cards;
b) installed five cards; and
c) "generated" (in quotations because all the bits come from Zetatech Software Installers and Valu-Pak) about 6–9 bits.
That's remarkable production!

3) Everyone in the group that tested HyperClown, along with most tournament players in our region, agree that Toughonium™ Wall is a piece of junk. We never worry about it; we love to see the Corp spend that kind of money on a terrible piece of ice. If Dennis did encounter Toughonium™, his six Clowns, along with a base 'breaker strength of 2, were more than enough to pass it for free.

4) Dennis chose his breakers just as *Proteus* was released. He eventually switched over to Wrecking Ball, but in practice, this microscopic change affected about one in twenty games (there just aren't many giant walls out there in tournament land). He chose Forward's Legacy to give himself a chance to handle huge sentries—he would have done the same thing if there was a similar breaker for Walls and Code Gates. Why not the cheaper Wild Card? Because the installation cost of the 'breaker is completely irrelevant in HyperClown. The multiple Zetatech Software Installers crank out huge amounts of bits. Going cheap has almost no meaning.

Having the higher-strength 'breakers in HyperClown (like Wizard's Book instead of Codecracker) has another advantage: Dennis could run with fewer Clowns installed. In those days, with Psycho Tycho being shunned on principle, it was an excellent choice, and it still is.

5) The strange mixture of Daemons was Dennis' personal decision, and it does look funny at first sight. The Succubi were chosen to hold the icebreakers, of course, and the Afreets to save slots in a stack that runs at 50 cards already. Dennis did a lot of trial and error with this deck, and he decided that this was the best mixture. Simply knowing his genius and the sheer number of

games he played, I believe he must have arrived at the right mixture, or at least gotten very, very close.

Bozomatic *did* evolve. The original version had three Armageddons instead of three Viral Pipelines—that version is still legal in Revised Constructed play. It also added the Wrecking Ball mentioned earlier. The second Joan of Arc was Dennis' addition of caution: He really, really feared Chimera, and for good reason. In his stack, Joan of Arc can prevent the trashing of nearly all his cards—having two may not be necessary, but it is easy to understand the choice.

The biggest weakness of the deck was City Surveillance, and that was a big weakness. Dennis had to just ignore the tags, and when he got blown up, he lost his hand and an action per turn. The sooner that happened, the worse it was for him, and if he lost his MIT in the explosion, he usually resigned. Identity Donor had just come out at that time, and I think it makes a lot of sense (in addition to ESC) for a more secure plan.

P.S. I worked out a faster, riskier version of the idea that I never played, because it was Dennis' baby from the start. With Matador and Rent-I-Con out there, it might just be time to bring it back...

Did You Know?

Bits and Pieces from the NR Trivia Collection

#6: Crystal Palace Station Grid

by Jens Kreutzer
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It all began in 1851. On Mayday that year, the Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations was opened in London's Hyde Park—and it was housed in the largest building the Victorian world had ever seen before. Designed by the architect Joseph Paxton and built in about nine months' time, mainly of iron and glass, the Crystal Palace looked like a giant hothouse styled in "Moorish" fashion, quite the rage at the time. Covering an area of 18 acres, the Crystal Palace was 1,848 feet long and 456 feet wide. It is claimed that the entire glass-production capacity of England was employed on the edifice, which was to receive more than 6,000,000 visitors from all over the world during the year that the exhibition lasted.

In June 1852, the Crystal Palace was dismantled and moved to the outskirts of London, to Sydenham in Kent. The reconstruction was completed in 1854, the redesigned building being smaller now but taller, and with a glass surface that doubled the original one in size. Situated in a huge area of parkland, the Crystal Palace became the world's first theme park for mass entertainment, featuring exhibitions, concerts, sports, and other activities. The year 1853 saw another Crystal Palace erected in New York for its exhibition.

Unfortunately, the original Crystal Palace was destroyed by fire in 1936 and hasn't been rebuilt since. The area where it once stood is still known as "Crystal Palace" today, and local residents are now fighting against a government plan to construct a multiplex cinema complex on the site.

Crystal Palace is also the code name for Cheyenne Mountain in the USA, under which is the command bunker for US Defense command SAC and NORAD. It was designed to survive a direct nuclear strike: The whole place is on springs and is buried deep inside the mountain. A location called Crystal Palace Station also exists in the novel *Teklab* by William Shatner.

Here, we leave fact and move over to fiction. As can be seen on the illustration of Crystal Palace Station Grid, the Crystal Palace in the **Netrunner** world is a huge orbital space station, named after its Victorian predecessor. Like almost everything in **Netrunner**, the Crystal Palace space station is taken from R. Talsorian's **Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.**™ roleplaying game. In the supplement *Rache Bartmoss' Guide to the Net*, we read that the Crystal Palace is situated at a stationary point (Lagrange-1) halfway between the Earth and Luna. Built and controlled by ESA, the space station is part of the Orbitsville Netspace Region. Rache Bartmoss himself has the following to say about this topic (p. 130f.): "Getting into Orbitsville is a little different than it is for the other regions. You must first go to one of the equatorial belt LDLs [Long-Distance Links] like Bogota or Nairobi. From there, you can jump to LEO [Low-Earth Orbit] ..., shift up in the LDL to the Orbital level, and run the region. ... [T]he delays are quite noticeable, and rather disorienting to grav-grounded weeflerunners. You just have to get used to getting visual and tactile feedback a second or two after you do things." This delay is reflected in the higher bit cost to break ice subroutines in the Palace.

What the actual space station looks like can be gleaned from the card artwork by R. Talsorian; its layout is also reflected in Netspace, as Rache Bartmoss tells us (p. 133): "The grid, like the Crystal Palace, is built with five ribbons encircling a central data trunk which runs along the station's axis like a spinal cord. In addition, the rings have microwave transmitters along their rims to facilitate intercommunications between the rings without having first to go through the center pole."

As in **Netrunner** gameplay, the Crystal Palace is also a favorite of Corporations in **Cyberpunk**: "Every government of note and every important corporation has an embassy or office here, and therefore a data fort to be run. The city grid itself is small and tight, and different from Earth-bound city grids in that it curves back in upon itself." So, the next time you run a juicy target up in orbit and curse about your Clowns having trouble with the delay, remember that you are far out—halfway to the moon in fact.

Interview with Jennifer Clarke Wilkes

by Jens Kreutzer
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Jennifer, you are among the people who really have done a lot to support our favorite game—much of it in your spare time. Many of our readers are interested in a person who shows such dedication and energy, and also feel gratitude for your great efforts and tireless succour. Maybe you could tell us a bit about yourself (and your family, if you like)?

I have a way of adopting causes, I guess. I used to work as the Canadian director for the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games (CAR-PGa) before I moved to Seattle. I'm not actively involved now, mostly because I'm so busy, but still do follow up from time to time.

When I applied to Wizards, one of the projects coming up at that time was **Netrunner**, and I was very interested in working on the game. I ended up editing **Ars Magica**™ instead but got involved with playtesting **Netrunner**. When the game went on hiatus, I'd already come to know the dedicated fans online and felt a responsibility to keep it alive somehow.

***Netrunner** has become an almost world-wide phenomenon, and you're inundated with emails from across the globe every day. Is there any foreign country and/or culture you're especially interested in or fond of? Maybe you speak a foreign language or several?*

I grew up in Quebec, Canada, so I learned French from an early age. I don't speak it fluently but can read and write quite well. I studied Classics at university, which means I can manage

pretty well with reading any Romance language. I also took German for a couple of years.

I'd love to get the chance to visit France and/or Germany. They're countries that interest me, and they have some of the most dedicated fans in the world! I'd also love to visit Australia and New Zealand sometime.

*The **Netrunner** rulebook lists you as "Proofing Daemon" and "Flavor Text Processor," meaning that you were there from the start. Could you tell our readers something about the way **Netrunner** was created and playtested? Were there any "earlier stages" before the final version?*

When I arrived at Wizards, playtesting was quite well advanced. There had been previous iterations of the game; in particular, an early version had all players as Runners against a "dummy" Corp deck. That got rejected pretty quickly—it just wasn't engaging enough.

I did a lot of "color playtesting," which meant using color photocopies of early card designs to see how they worked. The borders changed to more differentiable colors and shapes as a result of that. The first time I discovered the "secret" of taking damage to get agenda as the Runner was pure delight!

Which flavor text was created by you? Are there any "hidden" puns or jokes or allusions we've never thought of before? What goes on in your mind when you're thinking about a new flavor text piece?

I did quite a few. I'm proudest of the piece I wrote for Top Runners' Conference, appropriately enough, and it was a hit with Richard for the reference to Fermat's Last Theorem. Among my other notable contributions were Succubus, Playful AI, *Ice and Data*'s Guide to the Net, Shield, Food Fight, R&D Mole, and Sandbox Dig.

The flavor text for Subsidiary Branch refers to the offsite location that the **Netrunner** team used for early design and development. It was a welcome haven from workplace nonsense. In general, writing **Netrunner** flavor text was a great way to blow off stress. Many of the pieces refer cynically to Wizards internal policy (like PDCA, a quality-assurance process, which was parodied in Please Don't Choke Anyone).

You are working for one of the biggest games companies. More than a few games enthusiasts might imagine that this is in a way "the ideal job." But then, it also sounds like a whole lot of work. Is there anything you might like to tell us about your everyday work schedule?

In many ways it is a dream job. Here I am helping to make some of the best-known games in the world. Right now I'm busy with the *Monster Manual* for the 3rd edition of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®, coming out this fall. But it is really hard work.

As an editor, I have to balance making text clear and consistent with preserving the author's voice, plus deal with various parts of the company (art, layout, marketing) and hit an often-tight deadline. Sometimes I end up writing a lot of material. It makes for long hours. (That's why my **Netrunner** activity has been so reduced lately.) And Wizards is an office like any other, with the usual politics and frustrations that go with that. Still, it's not too many places that make playtesting games a *requirement* of the job.

I'm sure people will be wondering by now, "How does one get into such a position?"

I worked my way up to the point where I felt I had developed skills that were suitable for editing game material. I'd spent a number of years in the Canadian government, writing correspondence and instruction manuals, then later, editing regulatory text. I replied to an ad in *White Wolf* magazine for freelance editors and did some work on **Vampire: The Masquerade**™ and **StreetFighter**™ over 1994 and 1995. I applied to Wizards in 1994, purely on spec, and they seemed interested. Due to a number of factors, though, that didn't pan out at first. When they advertised for editors in the winter of 1994, I reapplied. This time they got back to me quickly. I was hired in May 1995.

Wizards is hiring a lot these days, though most of those jobs are in retail, events support, and such. Quite a few people here started out in one of those entry-level positions and got involved with the development of products, then moved on to more creative work. It's a good way to break in.

When was it that you were first "exposed" to the gaming scene? I for one started off with playing D&D® *at the age of 14 with Daniel Schneider, who also plays **Netrunner** now. Did you grow up in a "games-friendly" environment, or how did you come to find out about this interesting hobby?*

I've been gaming since 1978, when I stumbled across the game club at university and played D&D for the first time. Up till that point I'd been very shy and friendless, but the world of gaming opened up whole new possibilities for me. I formed my longest-lasting relationships through this hobby, including my marriage.

*Do you still have time to play games yourself, especially **Netrunner** (outside of tourneys)?*

I don't get to play as often as I used to, but once in a while I go to a convention just to play. I put on a monthly **Netrunner** event in Seattle and often play, but there isn't much opportunity to do so outside of that setting.

Are there any favorite cards or strategies you like best?

I keep trying to build a successful Newsgroup Taunting deck. I've started thinking about a combination with Data Sifters that could be promising. Also, I just love Lucidrine™—especially when I can convert the temporary bits into cold hard cash!

*I know that this is probably "classified", but is there any chance of another expansion for **Netrunner**, say, in one or two years' time?*

I really can't tell right now. The plan was to produce a mini-expansion for the "Classic" games every year or two, but a lot depends on how well the set sells.

*Do you think that there is room for many more game mechanisms in **Netrunner**, or would you say that it is just about "complete" by now?*

I think there is plenty of room. Many of the cards in *Silent Impact*™ have innovative mechanics that were just too complex for a limited release, but perhaps we'll see them someday. And there are plenty of creative minds out there!

*Is there any particularly interesting or spectacular **Netrunner** game you recall (maybe during playtesting)?*

There was the time I achieved the then-theoretical goal nicknamed "Silicon Sue"—a Runner whose natural handsize was less than zero. Lots of Lucidrine™ and MRAM chips. It's still a favorite style for me.

*Is there any **Netrunner** strategy that has turned up in the meantime which the design team hadn't anticipated?*

I don't think they were totally surprised by the tournament environment, though perhaps they didn't anticipate the extent to which certain strategies were exploited. In a more regularly supported system, like **Magic**®, in which the card mix is always changing, R&D can address abusive combinations fairly quickly. Unfortunately, **Netrunner** stagnated for years, and this small infusion of "hoser" cards isn't enough on its own. It's too bad that *Silent Impact* didn't come out as a complete set; I think it would have really changed things.

*Because of your continued support of **Netrunner**, the nickname "Jen of Arc" has stuck. Honestly, what do you think about this title, which connects you not only to a **Netrunner** card, but also to the saintly figure of Joan of Arc, who led the French in a war against the English in the middle ages?*

I'm very flattered by it, even though I don't normally like to be called "Jen." I guess that makes me the patron saint of **Netrunner**—but I don't really think much about the other associations. As to saving the game, though, that honor goes to all of you. My job is just to intercede ☺.

Any message you would like to get across to our readers (apart from "Buy more Classic*") ☺?*

Keep up your enthusiasm and creativity! I hope that this year we can at least publish the "Dioscuri" cards, though of course my preference is for another mini-expansion. Or even better, a full-scale **Netrunner** revival!

And, oh yeah, buy more *Classic!*

Thank you very much indeed for your time!

And thanks to all of you.

Netrunner in France

by Eric Platel
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Two short keywords about summed it up for the French **Netrunner** playing scene for a long time: "Paris" and the "1-in-15" format. Despite some success in areas like Bordeaux, Amiens and Lyon after the release of the *Proteus*™ expansion, our favorite game was actively played only in the capital until recently—the lost players having deserted mainly to **Magic** or **Legend of the Five Rings**™. Paris now hosts three different playing locations (one didn't survive into Y2K: farewell Phenomene J), all connected to one game shop. In spite of being so centralized, the French players-to-population ratio is probably one of the highest in the world, a ranking we certainly share with our German friends.

It was quite obvious that **Netrunner** could have a good commercial success in France if *somebody* had enough goodwill to start *something* in the provinces. After all, the *Classic* prerealease tournament attracted 30 players, not to mention the 36 Runners who tried for the French Open trophy. On the other hand, talking with the average French **Netrunner** player about tournament formats is something akin to walking on eggs. It's no secret that the Unlimited format was rejected both by the players and TRC France almost from the beginning, giving way for our well-known 1-in-15 French variant, which allows one copy of each card for every 15 cards in your deck. This amounts to three of any card in the standard 45-card deck.

The idea was not so bad at first glance: Instead of forcing them to buy tons of cards, this format was giving beginners a real chance to participate successfully in top level tournaments, sending to the trash "cheesy" decks full of Top Runners' Conference, City Surveillance, and so forth. Without the support of Wizards of the Coast®, the real drawback of the format was a lack of possibility for original deck design. Well-liked deck concepts like Golden Loop (with 18 difficulty-reducing agendas) or Rent-to-Own were made unplayable in the 1-in-15 format.

At last, we managed to find a solution to the two problem items mentioned at the beginning: **Netrunner** France. Led by Emmanuel Estournet (former DCI project leader and avid 1-in-15 fan) and Gwenael Tranvouez (last director of TRC France and strong Revised defender), this new focus of player activity may be the solution. The two main founders were chosen for a reason: They commanded respect from and inspired confidence in players from both factions and are well know by our beloved Jen. Supported and sponsored by French CCG magazines and WotC France, **Netrunner** France's objectives are to change our state of isolation from other countries and to develop the games in our "lost provinces", helping tournaments organizers by providing them with prize material and publicity through the Internet, and letting the players access useful goodies in their mother tongue from our website. Communication through the new technologies is our second focus, offering a distribution list and links to all gaming locations. I've heard that the Brittany City Grid recently gained a new player who came across our site while surfing around... maybe others will follow suit.

So what has **Netrunner** France done for the players so far? We hosted a Corporate War tournament, which is close to the OMNI League in its rules, but the concept of which has its origin in Magic's Arena™ League, an ongoing competition with all the games recorded and the rankings updated on the corresponding website. We'll change the playing format each trimester, starting off with Sealed and following up with Revised.

Fourty-four players are flocking around the tables, and the last word has not been spoken yet. You may well be impressed by these numbers. And what a wonderful feeling it is to shake off the pressure of work by playing **Netrunner** for one or two hours every day!

We also have plenty of other projects on our shelves: sponsoring a tournament in Amiens, creating a new 1-in-10 format and a French variant of Bartmoss "errata" (making it Noisy), adding articles and decks to the website, and hopefully setting strong links to other francophone Grids.

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Yours,
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